



June 15, 2015

Dear Workforce Board Members and Staff:

The Washington Workforce Association is deeply appreciative of the dedicated service of outgoing WETCB Chair Cindy Zehnder. Cindy came into the Chair position committed to listening to the needs of the system and has been a steady voice in asking about the impacts actions will have on the local systems and specifically on the work of the Workforce Development Councils. Through efforts like Retooling WA Workforce she became familiar with the needs of the workforce system and worked to tear down the silos that keep us from greater efficiency and effectiveness. She asked our opinions and acknowledged our struggles. Through it all, her priority was improving services for both job seekers and businesses who seek talent to grow and expand. Cindy leaves behind a legacy system known for its innovation and achievements. The new possibilities embodied in the new federal legislation will advance the course she helped set. We thank her for all she contributed.

As Cindy leaves and another WETCB Board leader emerges to take us through the remaining years of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), the Association offers some thoughts about continued partnerships and achievement. First, this State has undertaken herculean effort to review WIOA and respond to the State's required elements. This has been critical work, and we are pleased to have been able to contribute to our State's progress. Each of our local agencies needs that policy direction to continue provision of services and to meet local required leadership elements.

Washington State's workforce system has a long-standing history of partnerships and successes. As the system progressed under the Workforce Investment Act, our State's workforce development system was strengthened through the establishment of the "Partnering for Performance: Washington's Workforce Compact" entered into in September of 2007 by all the eighteen workforce development programs authorized under the Workforce Investment Act. This document outlined and committed each of the partners to mutual goals, guiding principles, roles and responsibilities, and actions to better coordinate services. In 2009, the Workforce Board furthered the development of the Compact in its discussion of WIA Roles of the Workforce Board and the Employment Security Department.

While we do not want to add to the already heavy planning and policy development burden of the Board, we are requesting the Board, similar to its work with the Compact, include two additional focal areas for which we have not yet heard significant discussion:

1. How and when will the three other mandatory core Titles of the Act (Wagner-Peyser Employment Services, Adult Basic Education and Voc. Rehab) be examined. These are essential and critical pieces of the legislation and of the workforce system. We believe they deserve similar attention and support to meet the requirements of the law and to capture the best thinking of this policy body. Some the questions of interest to us include, but are not limited to:
 - a. What are the specific Wagner Peyser, Adult Basic Education, and Vocational Rehabilitation accountabilities of interest to the Workforce Board?

- b. Are there specific resources afforded the Workforce Board to carry out those performance accountabilities and are they adequate?
 - c. What statewide integration expectations and policies need to be adopted?
 - d. How will these core partners track and report common federal performance measures?
2. What opportunity will there be for discussion of the overall operational design of this State's workforce system? Over the years at the state level we have evolved a workforce system that assigns certain responsibilities and authorities to the Workforce Board and to Employment Security in its role as the Administrative Entity. Under the Workforce Investment Act, these responsibilities were originally detailed in a letter released from Governor Locke's Chief of Staff. It was further detailed and updated in a joint document prepared by the staffs of the Board and Employment Security and presented to the Workforce Board. Those are not cast in stone and the new legislation asks we consider better ways to conduct the business of workforce. As we consider the systems in other states and wonder aloud we ask questions like:
- a. Are there other models or modifications we want to make to the roles and relationships of the two statewide, workforce specific, entities?
 - b. How do workforce policies of Employment Security Department differ from those of the Workforce Board?
 - c. What clarity exists to assure the WIOA grant/administrative oversight responsibilities of Employment Security Department do not represent a conflict of interest?
 - d. Does the Workforce Board have an opinion about the role WDCs should play in the ongoing design and leadership of the system?

The local workforce systems overseen by the Workforce Development Councils rely heavily upon the partnerships and capabilities of our partners at Employment Security Department and the Workforce Board. We care deeply about a system design that is customer centric, comprehensive, and broadly supported by local, state and federal partners. In addition, we care about a system design that takes into account local economic, workforce and partnership dynamics. As the new program year is upon us and the Workforce Board begins designing your upcoming Retreat we hope you will consider these questions and perhaps use part of that time to strategize next steps that might provide some answers to the questions we raise. We do not have programmed answers, but believe open and full engagement of the questions will allow us to maximize the *innovation and opportunity* embodied in the new legislation.

Respectfully,



Cheryl B. Fambles
WWA Board Chair

Cc: WWA Board Executive Directors